

Rep. Israel seeks federal help for veterans with his "Homeless Vets Check-Off" bill, which be reviewed by subcommittee on March 4 **Rep. Israel seeks federal help for veterans with his “Homeless Vets Check-Off” bill, which be reviewed by subcommittee on March 4**

Huntington, NY – Thursday, Rep. Steve Israel (D – Long Island) released the following statement urging Gov. Paterson to keep Suffolk County and other homeless veterans shelters open amid the budget tightening.

“I am deeply concerned and troubled to hear that a Long Island homeless veterans shelter and housing program could lose its funding because of state budget cuts. We have an obligation to ensure that no American veteran has to spend the night on the street. With a struggling economy and soldiers returning from fighting two wars, it’s more important than ever for us to provide services that show our veterans we won’t let them down, just like they didn’t let us down.

“One of the first bills I introduced this Congress is my ‘Homeless Veterans Check Off’ legislation. This bill would give Americans the chance every year at tax time to designate \$3 of their federal taxes for a homeless veterans assistance fund. I will continue to push for this bill in Congress, and in the mean time hope our local and state leaders will do all that they can to keep our veterans safe and healthy.”

The Suffolk County United Veterans Project is in danger of losing or facing cuts to their single room occupancy (SRO) funds from New York State, which they use to provide case management and supportive services for their 40 beds of supportive housing on 9 sites on Long Island.

Rep. Israel’s bill (H.R. 147) has 41 bipartisan co-sponsors in the House of Representatives and is set to be reviewed by the Committee on Veterans Affairs Economic Opportunity Subcommittee on March 4.

Approximately one-third of the adult homeless population in the United States served in the Armed Forces, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. An estimated 154,000 veterans are homeless on any given night and as many as twice that experience homelessness over the course of a year.

Rep. Israel’s legislation creates a section on annual tax return forms that would allow taxpayers to designate three dollars of their income tax payment to programs to assist homeless veterans. The designation would not increase the taxpayers’ tax liability and is similar to the Presidential Campaign Fund, in which a taxpayer can check a box to redirect a portion of their tax liability to the public financing fund for Presidential elections. The legislation creates a Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund where the money would automatically be deposited and expenditures from the fund would have to be appropriated by Congress and could only be used for the purpose of providing assistance to homeless veterans.

Rep. Israel serves on the House Appropriations Subcommittee for Military Construction and Veterans Affairs.